



Report summary for parents and carers on Westward House School

Date of inspection: November 2023

by Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

Overview

Many pupils at Westward House school arrive after a period of disruption to their education. They struggle in formal learning environments and lack confidence in their ability to learn. Over their time at the school, many pupils make sound progress in their social skills and confidence. Staff at the school support pupils to develop these skills effectively. As a result, pupils are happy to come to school, feel safe and have strong working relationships with the staff team. This represents sound progress.

Nearly all parents and carers value the regular communication with the school. They believe that the staff at the school know their children well and understand their social and emotional needs well.

During their time at the school, many pupils make suitable progress in their numeracy skills. However, overall, pupils' development of literacy and digital skills is limited due to the lack of opportunities for them to use these skills across the curriculum.

The school generally provides a balanced curriculum, which meets the requirements of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. This curriculum offer is enriched with a range of engaging activities outside of the classroom, for example through visits to museums, or residential trips to Edinburgh. However, in a few areas of the curriculum such as personal and social education (PSE), relationships and sex education (RSE) and careers, the provision is limited.

Overall, teachers' planning is not sufficiently detailed and does not identify opportunities for the progressive development of skills across the areas of learning. In addition, teachers do not make sufficient use of the outcomes of individual pupil assessments in their planning of activities. As a result, many activities do not provide sufficient challenge or opportunity to build on pupils' previous experiences and learning.

The school has a clear rationale for offering a variety of classes face-to-face, or through online or blended learning. The rationale for the different types of provision is built on pupils' needs and preferences. Around half the pupils complete their learning using an online platform. However, the school does not have an appropriate strategic overview of the courses being delivered or the progress pupils are making in their learning. In addition, in many of these online sessions, many pupils do not engage consistently well enough in their learning.

Recently, there have been significant challenges to leadership and staffing at the school and these have had a detrimental impact on the learning experiences, well-being and progress for pupils. In addition, leadership is not distributed well enough across the school, which limits the school's capacity to drive improvements.

Processes for assuring the quality of provision for pupils' progress are ineffective. At the time of the inspection, leaders were not able to evidence that they had a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Policies to safeguard children are generally detailed and provide useful information for staff. However, the implementation of these policy is inconsistent across the school. Leaders have failed to identify and address several safeguarding concerns at the school.

The school is not fully compliant with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

Recommendations

- R1 Strengthen the management of safeguarding and address the shortcomings identified during the inspection**
- R2 Comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003**
- R3 Establish procedures for quality assurance and improvement planning to focus on pupil progress and the standards they achieve**
- R4 Strengthen planning to develop skills and ensure increasing opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy, numeracy and digital skills, and give more attention to developing the most able pupils**

Compliance with the regulations for registration

Independent school inspections are governed by the Education Act 2002 and related regulations: the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. These regulations require an independent school to meet an appropriate standard in the following areas:

The quality of education provided by the school

The school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Although the school meets many of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 the school should:

- Draw up and implement effectively a written policy on the curriculum supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work [1(2)]
- Ensure the subject matter is appropriate for the ages and aptitudes of pupils, including those with a statement [1(2)(b)]
- Ensure the curriculum provides the opportunity for all pupils to learn and make progress [1(2)(i)]
- Ensure the teaching at the school enables pupils to acquire new knowledge, and make progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught [1(3)(a)]
- Ensure teaching involves well planned lessons, effective teaching methods, suitable activities and wise management of class time [1(3)(c)]
- Ensure teachers show a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensure these are taken into account in the planning of lessons [1(3)(d)]
- Ensure there is a framework in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use the information from such assessments to plan teaching so that pupils can make progress [1(3)(g)]
- Provide effective education for all pupils within a class to make progress, including pupils with statements and those for whom Welsh or English is an additional language [1(5)]

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school does not fully meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Although the school meets most of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003, the school should:

- Prepare and implement written policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils at the school in compliance with Welsh Government Guidance 283 / 2022 Keeping Learners Safe [3(2)(b)]
- Prepare and implement a written policy to promote good behaviour amongst pupils which sets out the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupil misbehaviour [3(2)(d)]
- Ensure the school has and implements effectively a satisfactory policy on First Aid [3(6)]
- Ensure the school keeps a written record of the sanctions imposed upon pupils for serious disciplinary offences [3(8)]

The suitability of proprietors and staff

The school does not meet the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Although the school meets almost all of the regulatory requirements for this standard, in order to comply fully with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 the school should:

- Ensure that prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff, that appropriate checks are carried out to confirm their identity, medical fitness, previous employment history, character references and where appropriate qualifications and professional references, and that information must be taken into account in determining whether an appointment is confirmed [4(c)]

Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The provision of information

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

What happens next

Since the school does not meet the standards required for registration, the Welsh Government will require the proprietor to submit an action plan within a specified period of time. This plan will set out the steps that the school will take to meet the standards, and the timescale within which it will complete each step.

Estyn advises the proprietor to amend its current development plan to show what actions the school intends to take in response to the recommendations. It is also advisable to circulate this plan, or a summary of it, to all parents/carers at the school.

School context

Name of provider	Westward House School
Proprietor	Harriet Harrison
Local authority	Carmarthenshire County Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	Independent
Residential provision?	No
Number of pupils on roll	20
Pupils of statutory school age	20
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	
Start date of inspection	06/11/2023
<p>Westward House is an independent school located in St Clears, Carmarthenshire.</p> <p>The school provides education for up to 35 children and young people between the ages of seven to eighteen years who have specific learning difficulties, including: dyslexia, dyspraxia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, as well as learning difficulties associated with autistic spectrum condition (ASC), and attention deficit disorder. In addition, the school provides education for pupils who have no specific learning need but whose parents wish to enrol their child as an alternative to local state schools. For example, as part-time provision where parents have elected to educate their child at home.</p> <p>There are currently 20 pupils on roll. Four pupils have statements of special educational need and one pupil is part funded by a local authority.</p> <p>The lead teacher has been in post since the school was established in February 2021 and is supported by a team of three teachers and two learning support assistants.</p> <p>The proprietor is also the proprietor of two other schools; Eastward House in Cardiff and Castle School in Haverfordwest.</p>	

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